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Prime Minister's schedule, April 8

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)  
April 9, 2008

08:46

Attended a session of the Headquarters for the Promotion of Gender Equality in Diet.

09:47

Met with Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Futahashi at Kantei.10:25

10:25

Met with former Finance Minister Omi.

11:04

Met with Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura. Afterwards, met with State Minister in Charge of Economic and Fiscal Policy Ota, Deputy Assistant Chief Cabinet Secretary Saka and others. Ota remained.

13:30

Met with Futahashi.

14:34

Met with the chairman of the Chamber of Deputies of Tunisia.

15:13

Met with Vice Foreign Minister Yabunaka, House of Representatives members Takeshi Noda and Hiroyuki Sonoda, and former Foreign Minister Kawaguchi. Afterwards, met with Special Advisor to Cabinet Kusaka.

16:12

Met with Special Advisor to Prime Minister Ito. Afterwards, met with former LDP Secretary General Nakagawa.

17:05

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Met with Deputy Foreign Minister Sasae. Later, attended a meeting of the Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy.

19:08

Met with former Prime Minister Mori. Then attended the "Evening of Africa" with ambassadors to Japan from African countries, joined by Nippon Keidanren Chairperson Mitarai.

20:50

Met with Machimura at Kantei residence.

4) U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Hill hints at progress on nuclear declaration issue after U.S.-DPRK talks

ASAHI (Page 9) (Excerpts)

April 9, 2008

Kei Ukai, Tetsuya Hakota, Singapore

Talks between United States Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill and North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye Gwan took place in the United States Embassy in Singapore yesterday. After the session, Hill indicated that there had been progress on the nuclear declaration issue, telling reporters: "We've seen a more significant progress than we had in the talks in Geneva (held last month). We may make some kind of announcement in this regard shortly." The working-level officials seem to have reached a basic agreement.

When asked about whether there was any move concerning the nuclear declaration issue, for instance, an announcement of agreement, Hill said: "It depends on what response his home country will show by tomorrow." Hill did not reveal any details of what he and Kim had discussed, but he was positive about the meeting, noting, "We had substantive talks." Kim, too, said after the discussion: "The differences of views have now been narrowed down in many aspects. I think the discussion went smoothly."

Hill is to arrive in Beijing on this morning and meet separately with Japan's Foreign Ministry Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Director-General Akitaka Saiki, the Chinese chief delegate to the six-party talks, and the South Korean chief delegate to the six-party talks to brief them on the results of the U.S.-North Korea talks. Kim also is scheduled to arrive in Beijing this morning. If the U.S. and North Korea agree on a roadmap for the nuclear declaration in the days ahead, Washington is likely to make a move to delist North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism. North Korea is likely to move to make a nuclear declaration to China, the host nation of the six-party talks. Also, moves for resuming the six-party talks are likely to gain momentum.

The U.S. and North Korea have differing opinions regarding the nuclear issue related to the proliferation of nuclear development programs by means of highly-enriched uranium (HEU) to other

countries, such as Syria. North Korea has denied the existence of HEU, arguing, "We can't declare it because we don't possess it." In the talks in Geneva last month, the U.S. suggested inserting these issues in another document that will be formed separately from the nuclear declaration, but this proposal was not approved.

According to an informed South Korean government official, after the Geneva talks, the North Korean officials came out with a counterproposal to the U.S. proposal by noting that they discussed

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the matter and organized their thoughts into the counterproposal." In the counterproposal, the North reportedly insisted that a document concerning the HEU and other issues should be formed separately from the nuclear declaration to be submitted to China so that it will be addressed only to the U.S. In addition, the North's proposal seemed to call for adding modifications regarding some phrases. In response, Washington presented a revised proposal to Pyongyang and waited for its response.

According to a source familiar with the U.S.-North Korea talks, coordination is underway between the U.S. and North Korea regarding descriptions about HEU and other items so that wording that can be interpreted in line with their respective assertions will be used. Given this, even though both sides reach agreement, the possibility is not ruled out that the nuclear declaration will not be a complete and accurate one.

5) Japan to renew sanctions against DPRK with no progress on abduction and nuclear declaration issues

ASAHI (Page 4) (Excerpts)  
April 9, 2008

The government yesterday decided to approve at a cabinet meeting on April 11 extending for a half year the term of the currently-imposed sanctions against North Korea, including an embargo on such North Korean ships as the Man Gyong Bong, and a ban on imports from that country. Behind this move is Japan's judgment that there is no concrete progress on the abduction issue, and also that North Korea has yet to come out with a complete and correct declaration of its nuclear programs regarding the nuclear issue.

Japan approved the current sanctions at a cabinet meeting in response to Pyongyang's nuclear testing conducted in October 2006. If they are renewed this time, it will be the third time following last October.

Although there is the possibility that during U.S.-North Korea talks yesterday, the North Korean side came up with a positive stance, but a senior Foreign Ministry official said that Tokyo's position is that in order for Japan to ease the sanctions, "North Korea needs to take action in concrete terms (to deal with such issues as abductions)." It is less likely that the North will take some kind of action for that end before the expiration of the sanctions.

The government has indicated that if some of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korea return to Japan, Tokyo will take that as "progress" on the abduction issue, and that it will willingly consider lifting the sanctions or providing economic assistance in the way to respond to progress on the nuclear and missile issues.

However, the Japan-North Korea working group on diplomatic normalization talks under the six-party talks has not been held since the second such meeting held in last September. There is no prospect in sight for the third session to take place. "Given the current situation, it is difficult to obtain the public's understanding (about lifting the sanctions)," the senior Foreign Ministry official said.

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party's Committee on the Abduction Issue (chaired by former LDP Policy Research Council Chairperson Shoichi Nakagawa) met yesterday and formed a resolution calling for

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a renewal of the sanctions. Former Prime Minister Abe, supreme advisor to the committee, noted: "Japan needs to declare its intent."

6) Interview with French Prime Minister: Expresses support for Japan's proposal for greenhouse gas emissions cuts

NIKKEI (Page 1) (Full)  
April 9, 2008

Prior to his Japan's visit starting on April 10, French Prime Minister Fillon gave an interview to the Nikkei. He during the interview highly evaluated the Japanese government's proposal for a sector-specific approach as a measure to cut greenhouse gas emissions, saying, "The Japanese proposal is consistent with Europe's proposal." This is the first announcement of support for the Japanese proposal by any country participating in the July Lake Toya G-8 summit in Hokkaido. Demand for the nuclear industry is growing throughout the world. Fillon indicated his intention to propose cooperation with Japan on the research and development of a fast-breeder reactor, when he visits Japan, saying, "France will step up cooperation with Japan in all consumer-related areas."

Regarding constraining emissions of greenhouse gases, the prime minister stressed, "We should set an ambitious goal at the G-8." Concerning the Japanese proposal for cutting emissions by sector, such as the industrial and household sectors, he noted, "The proposal will be widely adopted after 2012, the commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol. The EU might also revise its directive,"

The prime minister indicated concern about violation of human rights over the Tibet issue. He then said, "France will consider whether to take part in the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games, after determining the Chinese government's response."

Fillon is responsible for domestic politics in general as President Sarkozy's right-hand man. During his visit to Japan, which will last until the 13th, he will meet with Prime Minister Fukuda and various business leaders.

7) Prime Minister Fukuda plans to visit Europe in Golden Week holidays; Walking diplomatic tightrope

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)  
April 9, 2008

With the Group of Eight (G8) summit in July at Lake Toya in Hokkaido in mind, Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda plans to visit European countries during the Golden Week holiday period (in early May). In the wake of the so-called "gasoline Diet session, however, Fukuda has now been forced to walk a precarious tightrope. The reason is that the political situation may change around April 29 when the House of Representatives will be able to revote on a bill amending the Special Taxation Measures Law, including the provisional tax rate for gasoline and road-related taxes. On May 6 Chinese President Hu Jintao will visit Japan, which Fukuda considers the apex of his diplomacy. Overseas travel by prime ministers, which is controlled by internal politics, is now being even more affected by political motives than ever.

Fukuda, who will chair the G8 summit, wants to make the trip to Europe in order to meet with the leaders of the G8 members before

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the July event. A Foreign Ministry source said: "Building personal relationships is important before the G8 summit." However, only six days -- from April 30 through May 5-6 -- are available for Fukuda. Therefore, there are ideas -- one being he will go to Europe twice in late April and early May -- and the other being he should visit only France and Russia where new presidents have been elected.

If the Lower House readopted the legislation on April 29, the main opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) will likely submit a censure motion against the prime minister (to the House of Councillors). As such, the political situation will inevitably

become tense and the prime minister's planned trip to Europe would then be impossible.

Fukuda intends to take advantage of his summit with Hu to boost his administration's popularity. He considers the summit between the leaders of Japan and China, which will take place for the first time in ten years, indispensable for his "resonant diplomacy (for the Japan-U.S. alliance and Asia). But it will be difficult to expect such political developments once a censure motion is submitted to the Diet.

For this reason, some in the government and ruling parties have called for taking a second vote on a bill to amend the Road Construction Revenues Special Exemption Law, which would allow part of the road-related tax revenues to be used for other general purposes, and the Special Taxation Measures Law revision bill as a set on May 12 or after. However, it will be difficult to put off taking a second vote on the tax reform bill because Fukuda offered an apology for the confusion at a press conference on March 31 when the provisional rates expired.

8) Japanese tax authorities order PCI to pay additional back taxes over shady deals tied to ODA in Latin America

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Full)  
April 9, 2008

Major consultant firm Pacific Consultants International (PCI) paid about 25 million yen to influential persons in Costa Rica and other countries in Latin America during the period between 2000 and 2004 over projects tied to Japan's official development assistance (ODA) program. The company based in Tama City, Tokyo, was previously found to have misappropriated public funds for a project to dispose of chemical weapons left in China by the former Imperial Japanese Army. In questioning, the company did not reveal the names of the recipients, so the Tokyo Regional Taxation Bureau identified the payments as costs incurred for unrevealed purposes and ordered the company to pay more than 20 million yen in back taxes, including penalties.

Last October, the Tokyo District Public Prosecutors Office's special investigative squad searched PCI on suspicion of aggravated breach of trust for padding bills totaling about 100 million yen for a project to dispose of chemical weapons. The imposition of back taxes and penalties on the firm is a separate case from this. The taxation probe has brought to light the company's kickback maneuverings.

PCI was commissioned by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to conduct surveys in 51 countries for ODA projects from 2000 through 2004.

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According to persons connected to PCI, the company gave kickbacks to influential persons and brokers in those countries, with the aim of smoothly promoting surveys for agricultural development in northwestern Costa Rica. PCI billed JICA for the payments, listing the money as expenses paid to its subcontractors.

The taxation bureau demanded PCI disclose the names of the recipients, pointing out that rebates cannot be regarded as expenses. But since the company did not respond to the request, the bureau judged the payments as costs incurred for undisclosed purposes and applied a 40 PERCENT corporate tax rate, though it usually is 30 PERCENT .

It has been revealed through an investigation by the Board of Audit that PCI had sent padded bills to JICA and other institutions for projects in 16 countries, including Laos and Brazil, besides Costa Rica. Its padded bills total 140 million yen. The company was removed from JICA's list of potential commissioned firms in 2004. A PCI source said in an interview: "We have yet to confirm the facts."

9) BOJ leadership nominees: DPJ decides to reject nomination of Watanabe with Ozawa having his own way

MAINICHI (Top Play) (Full)  
April 9, 2008

The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) at its executive meeting yesterday evening decided how to respond to the government nomination for the posts of governor and deputy governor of the Bank of Japan (BOJ). They decided to accept a proposal for promoting incumbent Deputy Governor Masaaki Shirakawa (58), currently acting BOJ governor, to governor. However, they will reject the proposed nomination of Hiroshi Watanabe (58), a Hitotsubashi University graduate school professor and a former vice finance minister for international affairs, as a deputy governor succeeding Shirakawa. The subcommittee to consider personnel appointments requiring Diet approval had earlier reached a decision that it would be possible to endorse the government nomination of Watanabe as deputy BOJ governor. However, President Ichiro Ozawa, who was opposed to the appointment of Watanabe, has apparently had his own way. As a result, the likelihood is that only the proposal for appointing Shirakawa as governor will be adopted by a majority from the ruling and opposition parties, and one of the two deputy governors' positions would be left vacant.

Nomination of Shirakawa to be endorsed in today's Diet roll call

Explaining the reasons that the DPJ has decided to reject Watanabe, Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama after the executive meeting

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yesterday evening said: "The DPJ has raised the banner of banning all "amakudari" (golden parachute) appointments. We will follow this major policy line." He underscored his position of firmly maintaining the party policy of disapproving the appointment of a former Finance Ministry official as a BOJ executive.

Regarding his earlier indication of accepting Watanabe's nomination, Hatoyama explained, "There is a difference between an administrative vice finance minister and a vice finance minister for international affairs. The weight of the position of governor and that of deputy governor also differs. I have in the end reached a decision that I should say 'no' to amakudari practices."

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A number of members of the subcommittee to consider personnel appointments requiring Diet approval supported the nomination of Watanabe, with one saying, "He is an expert on international financing. His appointment to the post of deputy governor is different from being an amakudari." However, others, citing that the party had earlier opposed the government nominations of Toshiro Muto, former administrative vice finance minister, and Koji Tanami, also former administrative vice finance minister, for the post of governor, said, "The people would find it difficult to understand if we endorse his appointment." The panel in the end left the matter to executives, including Ozawa, to work out, by attaching an opinion that many members took the view that the nomination of Shirakawa as governor is acceptable and it is possible to endorse the nomination of Watanabe as deputy governor.

Among other opposition parties, the Japanese Communist Party has already decided to endorse neither nominee. The People's New Party has endorsed both proposals. The Social Democratic Party intends to only endorse the selection of Shirakawa as governor.

10) Leaving position of deputy BOJ governor vacant "unavoidable," says senior government official

MAINICHI (Page 1) (Full)  
April 9, 2008

Following the Democratic Party of Japan's (DPJ or Minshuto) decision not to endorse the government nomination of Watanabe as deputy Bank of Japan (BOJ) governor, Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda at around 8:30 p.m. yesterday afternoon met with Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura at the prime minister's official residence. They discussed how to deal with the situation in the future for about 50 minutes.

Regarding the selection of another candidate in the event of the nomination of Watanabe being rejected in an Upper House plenary session today, one senior government official indicated his view that leaving the position vacant for the time being would be unavoidable. He noted, "Even if Mr. Watanabe is rejected, it would be impossible for the government to come up with another candidate immediately."

11) Internal discord in DPJ over Watanabe's nomination as DPJ deputy governor, some may defy party decision in two Diet houses votes

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Excerpts)

April 9, 2008

The main opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) yesterday decided to reject the government's nomination of Hiroshi Watanabe, professor at Hitotsubashi University graduate school and a former vice finance minister for international affairs, as one of the deputy governors of the Bank of Japan, respecting party head Ichiro Ozawa's remarks opposing the practice of amakudari or placing retired senior bureaucrats into high-paying posts in public and private sectors. However since many in the DPJ said yesterday that their party should approve Watanabe's nomination, internal discord is now visible in the largest opposition party. Under such circumstances, some DPJ lawmakers may vote for the nomination of Watanabe today in the plenary sessions of the two Diet chambers, defying the party's decision. The internal discord over the nomination of Watanabe for a BOJ deputy will become a litmus test to

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gauge Ozawa's grip on the party.

"If we disapprove Watanabe, more than ten members may defy the party's decision," Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama told his aide, Sakihito Ozawa, and other members yesterday afternoon near the entrance of the Lower House plenary hall.

Ozawa has been in silent for three days since he said on a TV talk show that he couldn't accept the appointment of any former Finance Ministry bureaucrat (for the top posts of the central bank). Ozawa's remark has been creating a stir in the DPJ. Prior to the presentation of the government's nomination of Watanabe, Hatoyama made this comment: "The prevailing view in the party is that the party should go along with Watanabe's nomination." But a young lawmaker said: "Because the party head has decided to disapprove, we should follow."

There is concern that if the party binds its members to abide by a party decision in defiance of the majority view in the party, some members will defy the party decision. As a result, his party may split in two, so Hatoyama has tried to find the middle ground between the two sides.

The views in the DPJ on whether to approve or disapprove Watanabe's nomination are intricately interwoven with how close or distant from Ozawa the lawmakers feel, a sense of rivalry with the government and ruling coalition, and consideration for public opinion.

12) Ruling bloc looks to send all priority bills to Upper House by April 15 with their re-adoption at end of session in mind

ASAHI (Page 4) (Excerpts)

April 9, 2008

Reopened deliberations in the House of Councillors that had been stalled since late March have begun easing the congestion of bills. The ruling bloc intends to send bill after bill to the Upper House with the aim of passing them all in the Lower House by April 15 in anticipation of stalled Diet deliberations following a second vote on the provisional gasoline tax rate toward the end of the current session of the Diet.

The LDP General Council met yesterday, and Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Tadamori Oshima declared: "We would like to send many important bills to the Upper House from this week through next

week." What Oshima had in mind was a timetable for handling bills before the June 15 closure of the current Diet session.

In order to restore the provisional tax rates on gasoline and other products, the ruling bloc plans to hold a second, overriding vote as early as late April. If that is followed by the Upper House's adoption of a censure motion against Prime Minister Fukuda submitted by the opposition camp, the ruling bloc intends to counter it with the lower chamber's approval of a cabinet confidence motion. In reaction, if the opposition parties boycott deliberations, the Diet would stall for a long time. This is what the ruling camp is envisaging. Many LDP lawmakers think that if a second vote is taken, the Diet will stall until the end of the current session.

As such, the ruling parties are intending to send the remaining priority bills to the Upper House by April 15 so that they would be able to re-discuss those bills before the current session ends,

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while bearing in mind the 60-day rule regarding a delay in voting on bills in the upper chamber as de facto rejection. In the ongoing Diet session, the government has presented a total of 75 bills. Of them, 22, mostly those related to the budget, have cleared the Lower House, including three yesterday. Without prospects for deliberations in the Upper House, the remaining bills might be scrapped. An LDP Diet Affairs Committee member said: "Given the ruling bloc's minority in the Upper House, we might have to readopt legislation."

### 13) DPJ to intensify offensive in Upper House

ASAHI (Page 4) (Excerpts)  
April 9, 2008

The House of Councillors held yesterday full-fledged deliberations on roads and pensions.

Also yesterday, the Upper House Financial Affairs Committee began discussing the government-presented taxation-related bills in tandem with the Democratic Party of Japan's counterproposals, including one to abolish the gasoline and other provisional tax rates. Reversing its rejection of deliberations, the DPJ has now decided to discuss bills following the expiration of the gasoline and other taxes.

At the same time, the party will remain on alert until late April, when the ruling bloc will be able to take a two-thirds overriding vote in the Lower House in accordance with the constitutional 60-day rule. Until then, the largest opposition party does not intend to allow votes on bills presented by the government and the DPJ. The party plans to play up the injustice in a second vote, while spelling out the positive effects of lowered gasoline prices.

The Upper House Health, Labor and Welfare Committee began discussing the government-presented pension-related bills ahead of the DPJ-submitted bills. The DPJ thinks that this will allow the largest opposition party to grill Health, Labor and Welfare Minister Yoichi Masuzoe over the pension record fiasco before the committee.

The strategy also reflects the DPJ's firm determination to drive the Fukuda administration to a tight corner. In past deliberations, the party successfully elicited apologies from both the prime minister and Masuzoe over the question of unidentified pension record holders. DPJ Upper House Secretary General Kenji Hirata said, "Momentum is building in the party to submit a censure motion (against the health, labor and welfare minister)." In a DPJ executive meeting yesterday, the party confirmed the policy course to apply greater pressure on the government with an eye on April 15, when the government will start withholding medical insurance premiums from the pension benefits of those 75 and over.

The DPJ is going to reinforce its confrontational stand through the Finance and Health and Welfare Committees. In the event the government and ruling parties take a second vote in the Lower House, the DPJ looks to submit a censure motion against the prime minister to the upper chamber. The party intends to stir public opinion through May, according to a senior DPJ Diet Affairs Committee

member.

14) Poll: 55 PERCENT back Diet dissolution if censure motion passed

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MAINICHI (Page 1) (Abridged)  
April 9, 2008

The Mainichi Shimbun conducted a telephone-based nationwide public opinion survey on Apr. 5-6, in which respondents were asked what they thought Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda should do if a censure motion against him is passed in the House of Councillors. To this question, 55 PERCENT answered that Fukuda should dissolve the House of Representatives for a general election, topping all other answers. A censure motion has no legal binding force. In the survey, however, a majority of the public indicated that Fukuda should seek the people's judgment.

Meanwhile, 21 PERCENT answered that Fukuda "doesn't have to do anything because a censure motion has no legal force," with 19 PERCENT saying "his cabinet should resign en masse."

The government and ruling parties are going to take a second vote in the House of Representatives on a bill to revise the Special Taxation Measures Law in an aim to restore the now-expired provisional rate of taxation on gasoline. The leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto) is ready to submit a censure motion in the House of Councillors if the bill is passed in a second vote.

15) High school kids uninterested in economizing

SANKEI (Page 28) (Abridged)  
April 9, 2008

Among Japanese high school students, fewer than half are taught by their parents about the importance of economizing, and their proportion is substantially lower than in China, South Korea, and the United States. This became known from a survey of high school students conducted by the Japan Youth Research Institute (JYRI) over their spending attitude. The JYRI analyzes: "In the United States, children are encouraged to opt for self-reliance. In Japan, however, people are now well-off. In addition, the ideal of education is weak in Japan, so parents might have spoiled their children."

The survey was conducted from October through November last year at a total of 76 urban high schools in Japan, the United States, China, and South Korea. Answers were obtained from 5,395 persons.

"Do your parents usually tell you about the importance of economizing?" To this question, "yes" came from about 80 PERCENT in the United States, China, and South Korea. Japan was substantially lower than the three countries. Many Japanese high school students regularly receive allowances from their parents, and their proportion was highest among the four countries. However, Japan was lowest in terms of high school students being asked by their parents how they spend that money.

16) Survey of high school students in Japan, U.S., China, S. Korea:  
Perception gap seen over food safety

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 3) (Abridged)  
April 9, 2008

Japanese high school students do not much care about food safety when they buy food products. This fact became known from a survey conducted by the Tokyo-based Japan Youth Research Institute in

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Japan, the United States, China, and South Korea. Chinese high school students were most aware of food safety. This can be taken as reflecting China's domestic circumstances, such as the serious

problem of pesticide residue.

The survey was taken from October through November last year with about 5,400 students at a total of 76 public and private high schools in the four countries.

"Do you check the safety of the food products you buy?" To this question, "yes" came from 13 PERCENT in Japan, 42 PERCENT in China, 20 PERCENT in South Korea, and 18 PERCENT in the United States. Japan was at the lowest level, and China was more than three times higher than Japan.

"Have you ever been worried about the safety of food products you buy?" To this question, 74 PERCENT in China answered "yes," topping all other countries. South Korea was at 64 PERCENT, followed by Japan at 60 PERCENT and the United States at 53 PERCENT.

Asked if they would choose to buy pesticide-free and healthy food products, 76 PERCENT in China answered "yes," followed by South Korea at 45 PERCENT, the United States at 38 PERCENT, and Japan at 34 PERCENT.

17) Delegation of JCP lawmakers file protest at U.S. Embassy on series of crimes by U.S. soldiers (Akahata)

AKAHATA (Page 1) (Full)  
April 9, 2008

A delegation of Diet members from the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) yesterday visited the U.S. Embassy in Japan (Minato-ku, Tokyo) to lodge a protest against the series of crimes committed by U.S. military personnel, including the incident of the rape of a schoolgirl in Okinawa Prefecture and the robbery and murder of a taxi driver in Kanagawa Prefecture.

Four lawmakers delivered the protest: Diet Affairs Chairman Keiji Kurata, Lower House members Seiken Akamine and Akira Kasai, and Upper House member Tetsushi Inoue. They were met at the Embassy by Raymond, F. Greene, the chief of the security affairs unit of the Political Section. After the protest was made, Kurata met with the press in the Diet Building.

In addition to the protest against the series of crimes by U.S. soldiers, the delegation made four points: 1) There should be full compensation to the families of the victims and information should be swiftly provided to Japanese authorities about deserters; 2) there should be a drastic revision of the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA); 3) there should be a reduction and consolidation of U.S. bases in Japan and a halting of the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan and a cancellation of the deployment of a nuclear-powered carrier to the U.S. Naval Base at Yokosuka (Kanagawa Prefecture).

Unit chief Greene said he would transmit the contents of the protest to Ambassador Schieffer, the U.S. government, and the U.S. forces in Japan. He also expressed "the government's feeling of regret" for the incidents, adding, "We will make every effort so that (such incidents) will not occur again."

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Kurata raised the criticism that every time an incident occurs, in spite of such promises as "no recurrences" and "tighter discipline," another incident later occurs. One of the reasons for that, he said, is that the U.S. military is at war, starting with the Iraq war. He then sought a drastic revision of the SOFA that would allow the handing over of U.S. soldiers to Japanese authorities whenever they commit crimes. He also sought a reduction and consolidation of U.S. bases in Japan.

Greene stated: "Our views on the SOFA and the U.S. bases differ, but crimes should not happen. We would like to continue our talks on what to do so that incidents do not recur."

MESERVE